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ABSTRACT

A brief pamphlet highlights the findings of the "Pennsylvania Profile of Education Project" and gives broad recommendations for the improvement of public education in the state. The report emphasizes and elevates the important role of the teacher in the pursuit of quality education. Among the recommendations are the following: (1) teachers must become primary decision and policy makers in the design of the education program; (2) parents are essential in an excellent education system; (3) cooperation of government, business, and industry is basic to educational excellence; (4) the curriculum must be broad and varied enough for students to pursue academic and career goals; and (5) alternative education programs and programs for exceptional children are necessary. The recommendations also outline steps to improve teacher education programs and professional standards and suggest that the beginning salary for teachers be $25,000 and reach at least $50,000. (MLF)

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an invitation...

EA 017 980

the Report of the Pennsylvania State Education Association Task Force

on Educational Excellence

May 1985

another report about education.

WHY?

The Pennsylvania State Education Association applauds the national interest in education as evidenced by the many recently published reports. Even though there are many valuable recommendations in these reports with which PSEA agrees, PSEA believes that teacher involvement would have enhanced the recommendations that are before the public for consideration. Teachers are in daily contact with students and are directly responsible for the educational process and have accumulated a vast resource of information through training or by experience which has largely been ignored.

Therefore, the Pennsylvania State Education Association issues this report by teachers who know the importance of a public education system that guarantees the development of the potential of every child in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Teachers know that a sound public education will stimulate our economic success and strengthen the defense of our nation. Because of their direct connection in the system, teachers also know that the schools have done well in Pennsylvania. They recognize the strengths and the weaknesses of the system, and they are aware that we can improve our strengths and minimize our weaknesses with comprehensive and widespread support from all segments of our society. PSEA seeks a public education system in Pennsylvania that treats every student equally and equitably through fair laws, improved facilities, adequate staffing, and effective administration. Admittedly, an excellent educational system will cost money, but PSEA believes that such an expenditure is fundamental to this investment in our future.

Student progress and growth must be paramount in the educational process. Everything must be directed to teach

students how to read, think, and write. They must have ability in mathematics and science. They should be able to speak a foreign language. They must have the ability to compete and survive in their career choices, and they must also have an appreciation of the arts. They should be able to pursue their development in settings that are structurally sound and aesthetically appealing. Above all, they must be treated in a manner that fosters their personal worth and social consciousness.

In this process, FSEA believes that the role of the teacher is critical. Teachers must become primary decision and policy makers in the design of the education program because of their training and skill. They must be certified after having completed strong college programs in both subject matter and the art of teaching. In their classes, they must have the time to teach with freedom and with assistance to instruct a class or an individual student. Their instructional time must not be interrupted, nor must it be corrupted by unenforced discipline. Their teaching environment must be attractive for students and they must have up-to-date materials and proper equipment. Teachers must be supported by an effective administration that advocates sound educational policy, appropriate services, and parental involvement.

I LOOK FORWARD TO AN AMERICA THAT IS NOT AFRAID OF GRACE AND BEAUTY... AN AMERICA THAT WILL REWARD ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ARTS AS WE REWARD ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS AND STATECRAFT.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

PSEA recognizes that parents are essential in an excellent education system. Parents must encourage the innate initiative, inquiry, and curiosity in their children. They must support their activities and monitor their progress throughout elementary and secondary school. They must help develop healthy, positive attitudes toward school and learning by stressing the value of education. Most importantly, they must help guide their children with patience and care through this complex time of personal and academic growth.

PSEA believes that the cooperation of government, business and industry is basic to educational excellence. The right to a free and public education is inherent in our democratic system and therefore must be guaranteed and supported. All levels of government must cooperate with each other in establishing law and providing funds to avoid any one level of government from being overburdened or overtaxed. Government must assure that public education affords all students access to the program of his or her choice. Business and industry must provide opportunities for our youth. Young people who know that a job is available when they are graduated will have the incentive to achieve in school. Through their research facilities, business and industry must help the public schools identify economic trends that will affect future employment, because our students must be able to experience a curriculum that reflects present and future need as related to employment. Once our students are in the work force, business and industry must assist with training necessary for them to remain in their jobs. Although their interest is primarily economic, business and industry should assist the public schools in the pursuit of the humanities and the arts with an appropriate financial commitment as they do with media, foundations, and institutions. President John F. Kennedy once said: "I look forward to an America that is not afraid of grace and beauty . . . an America that will reward achievement in the arts as we reward achievement in business and statecraft." Government, business, and industry can help the schools develop every aspect of our students.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association maintains that public schools reflect their communities. The public schools are affected by social and economic forces over which they have no control. At the same time, they are charged with the responsibility for educating every child. The public schools cannot and should not be subjected to whim or fancy, political

popularity or fiscal irresponsibility. The public schools must reflect the best that we have to offer our students, must encourage the pursuit of knowledge, and must be the cornerstone of our democracy. With a strong public school system, Pennsylvania will reach great heights in achievement. Pennsylvania teachers have been and are ready to help reach those heights. The Pennsylvania State Education Association submits this plan to have education work for excellence with every student.

the TEACHER, the LEARNER, the SCHOOL

PSEA believes that formal education is a building process that begins before kindergarten. Each teacher builds on the skills brought by the student and sends those students on with more refined skills for continued growth at the next grade level. This process is repeated until graduation. Because the public schools are a people business, it must be recognized, once and for all, that the schools are not structured in the industrial mode in that they do not produce an inanimate product. The public schools graduate human beings with the ability to cope. Their building process must provide opportunity for all — the gifted and talented, the exceptional student, the so-called average student — and must provide the flexibility to deal with each student as determined by his or her need.

PSEA recognizes that the teacher is the nucleus in this process and must be recognized as the academic leader. The teacher must be free to practice the art of teaching which inspires students, encourages creative thought, and demands performance. This art must not be relegated to a uniform set of techniques and methods. Each teacher uses method in a unique and personal way to encourage individual and collective student progress. No single prescription for teaching will make an excellent teacher. Rather, teaching must be viewed as a dialogue between teacher and student that is personal and individual, that is instructive and demanding, and that is flexible and constructive. Teaching is learning with direction, but always with compassion and understanding. Because every student is special with needs that go beyond the instructional environment, counselors, nurses, dental hygienists, psychologists, and home and school visitors must be an important part of the educational team that provides services for students. Students may experience learning difficulty, social and health problems including those caused by drug and alcohol abuse, and personal frustration. Therefore, there must be appropriate staffing to work with teachers to facilitate the life of students. In so doing, the student will leave school with a better knowledge of self and with a greater capacity to function in society.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE FORTRESSES FOR LEARNING; THEY MUST BE INVITATIONS TO LEARNING.

PSEA also believes that the environment in which people work and live is extremely important to their mental and physical health. In the private sector, much attention has been directed toward the improvement of the work place. The public schools must be treated with the same attention with serious concentration given to improved classrooms, proper equipment, and attractive buildings. Public schools should not be fortresses for learning; they must be invitations to learning.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- The teacher shall be recognized as the academic leader.
- Teachers shall be recognized and involved as decision-makers in the establishment of the education program.
- Instructional time is valuable and a more efficient use of that time shall be established to include:
  - -- regularly scheduled planning time during the school day for all teachers.
  - -- regularly scheduled time for parent conferences, individual student conferences, group planning, group conferences related to curriculum and program evaluation.
  - -- removal of non-instructional duties from the teacher day.
  - -- elimination of classroom interruptions.
- The teacher-pupil ratio; counselor-student ratio; nurse-student ratio shall be improved with at least a counselor and a nurse for a school building. A full-time dental hygienist shall be required for every school district and other consultant services to assist students shall be available.

- Pleasant, humane school buildings that are clean, well-lighted, comfortable, and appropriately decorated shall be required.

OPPORTUNITIES

PSEA believes that students enrolled in the public schools must have education programs that meet their needs. Parents, teachers, administrators, and school boards must be committed to programs that are truly opportunities for students. The core of any program is the curriculum. In its diversity, the curriculum must develop basic skills and stimulate learning. It must encourage good citizenship. The curriculum must be adaptable to student individuality and choice, and must be based on the fact that all students deserve an education equal to their abilities.

For elementary and secondary education, the Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- As the educational leaders, teachers shall be responsible for curriculum with appropriate time provided for the development and evaluation of curriculum.
- Curriculum requirements shall be stated in clear, concise, and simple terms. The needs of students shall determine content.
- The curriculum shall emphasize reading, writing, and speaking skills in all courses.
- A mathematics program shall be required for all students.

- A science program shall be required for all students.
- A social studies program shall be required for all students.
- Foreign language instruction shall be mandated with a wide range of offerings available.
- A computer literacy course shall be required for all students. Advanced computer science electives shall be available.
- The study of fine arts and the humanities shall be mandated.
- Physical education and health education, including nutrition, shall be mandated for all students.
- Vocational-technical education shall be mandated as a general curriculum offering.
- To complement the curriculum, libraries shall be mandated for every school building staffed by certified librarians.
- Throughout all curriculum, equal educational opportunity for the exceptional children shall be enforced.
- Testing shall be a part of the curriculum offered by school districts to assist in the learning process of students and to stimulate program improvement.

the FIRST TIME

Because the foundations for all learning are formulated in the early years, the elementary experience is extremely important in the development of students. The elementary teachers must have no less than the best as they do all that is expected of them. They must have the best environment, the best equipment, the smallest number of students in their classes, and the widest range of assistance by other professional personnel as they teach young students.

At the elementary level, the Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- Early detection and intervention programs shall be required to help identify problems that may affect success in school.
- Pre-school and kindergarten education shall be mandated and supported.
- The present elementary instructional schedule required by the curriculum shall be reexamined to guarantee elementary teachers preparation and planning time to fulfill responsibilities assigned.
- The elementary teacher shall be assisted by certified subject area specialists to augment instruction, including, but not limited to:
  - -- art, music
  - -- reading

-- health and physical education

-- mathematics

-- science

-- career awareness

- Improved remedial instruction for identified deficiencies shall be provided by certified specialists.
- Comprehension and mastery of learning skills as identified by the teacher shall determine the advancement of students.
- Time shall be provided during the school day and year for teachers to discuss instructional approaches and techniques, to discuss and evaluate the instructional program, and to formulate recommendations for program improvement.

LATER ON

The secondary program continues the learning process started in the elementary school. The curriculum, while it fulfills standards mandated by law, must be broad and varied enough for students to pursue academic and career goals. The curriculum must provide courses that encourage sensitivity to art and literature, develop the ability to solve problems in this growing technological society, promote an understanding of science and its principles, and develop a knowledge and an awareness of our changing global society.

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VOCATIONAL PURSUIT.

It must also encourage vocational pursuit. At the same time. the curriculum must be flexible enough to provide for a change of option and for necessary remediation as individual needs are identified.

At the secondary level, the Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- All secondary courses shall be developed by teachers to include a clear statement of expectations and requirements.

- A secondary curriculum shall provide a variety of choices for students to pursue academic and career goals.

- Vocational-technical program shall be a viable option not limited by administrative inconvenience or difficulty. The vocational-technical program shall be improved as follows:

  -- The programs offered shall be similar to the actual work environment with materials and equipment of the same quality as that actually used in business and industry.

  -- The program shall be coordinated with the educational programs of the sending schools.

  -- An exploratory vocational-technical experience shall be available for students prior to their choice of a vocational-technical program.

  -- The advisory and craft committee system shall be revitalized to develop a positive relationship between the public schools and business and industry, and to help with instruction, curriculum improvement, equipment purchase, and on-the-job training.

  -- Vocational-technical teachers shall be certified in their field and shall be provided time for professional improvement.

-- The vocational-technical program shall be for motivated students who choose to enroll in the program.

INSTRUCTION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL SHOULD NOT TERMINATE WITH GRADUATION. THE PROGRAM SHALL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE CITIZENS WHO HAVE NEED FOR SKILL REFINEMENT AND/OR RETRAINING.

- Alternative education program with the following guidelines shall be available for those students who cannot function in the regular program for reasons beyond their control.

  -- The alternative program must be developed at the local level with clear and explicit goals that are related to the education program of the schools being served and must include remediation to improve student weaknesses identified in the parent schools.

  -- The program must be considered the same as a course offering within the parent school.

  -- Teachers must share in the operation and management of the program and must maintain a great deal of autonomy.

—— Students must enter the program by choice with the option to return to the regular setting.

—— Because the program is geared to the individual student, each school and class must be small and manageable.

- Secondary teachers shall teach four classes per day with the additional time used for preparation and individual student help.
- Secondary teachers shall have time during the school day and year for subject area and interdisciplinary meetings to evaluate and improve programs for students.
- Instruction at the secondary level should not terminate with graduation. The program shall be made available for those citizens who have need for skill refinement and/or retraining.

EXCEPTIONAL THOUGHTS

The public schools in Pennsylvania are required to provide a free and appropriate public education for all exceptional children, and, to the maximum extent appropriate, these exceptional children are to be educated with children who are not exceptional. PSEA endorses and supports this requirement and believes that the education program, the placement of students, and the involvement of the professional staff is essential for the success of the exceptional child.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- The welfare of every exceptional child shall be the prime consideration in all program placements.
- All professional personnel involved with exceptional students shall share equally in decisions made at all levels and shall have control over program implementation.
- Mainstreaming shall be based on the assumption that the placement of exceptional students in the regular classroom will result in increased social interaction and social acceptance by the regular students who will serve as behavior models for exceptional students. All students affected by mainstreaming shall be prepared for the experience.
- In-service programs, developed in consultation with teachers, shall be conducted for the professional staff to prepare them for the mainstreaming experience.
- Released time shall be available for teachers to share student data, to prepare the individual education programs, to conduct on-going parent conferences, and to share knowledge and use of instructional materials and techniques.
- Appropriate and sufficient instructional materials shall be provided for teachers of exceptional children immediately upon the placement of students.
- Aides shall be provided for both regular and special education programs serving exceptional children.
- Appropriate support personnel shall be provided according to the Individual Educational Prescription (IEP).
- Individual education prescriptions (IEP's) to establish goals for student learning shall not be used to evaluate teachers.

- Class size shall be determined by the type and severity of exceptionality and by the number of exceptional students assigned to both special and regular education teachers, and shall be enforced.

- Special education programs shall be fully funded.

the PROFESSION

In order to help improve the quality of instruction in the public schools, it is necessary to improve teacher education programs and professional standards. PSEA believes that the standards for entry into the profession, the teacher education programs of colleges and universities, and the certification of teachers should be established by the profession, including classroom teachers.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- The State Board of Education shall be an appointive and elective body that is reflective of the profession.

- The State Board shall have the power to

  -- establish standards for teacher education.
  -- determine standards for entry into the profession.
  -- certify those who successfully meet the standards.

- The State Board shall represent the entire profession with a majority being classroom teachers elected by their constituency.

- Teacher education programs shall be accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

- School districts shall hire graduates from accredited schools of education as certified by NCATE.

POLICY AND LEARNING

Parents must be assured that the environment in the public schools is suitable for learning. Certainly, parents must know that the professional staff is prepared and qualified and that the curriculum is sound. Parents must also know that there is the expectation that students are in school, that they behave, and that students are in a classroom that will encourage the best in their performance. Everyone agrees that learning and improvement can only take place if students are present. It is also agreed that proper behavior in a class of acceptable size is an important ingredient to student success. PSEA believes that teachers, along with administrators, school boards and other professional personnel, should establish simple, understandable, statements on attendance and discipline. PSEA also believes that classes should be of size that encourages student attendance and minimizes the possibility of disruption.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- An attendance policy shall be established in every school district. It shall provide for the implementation of a corrective solution for the chronic absentee.
- A clear and fair discipline policy shall be established in every school district. This policy should set standards for conduct and provide alternatives for the resolution of difficulties as they occur.
- The attendance and discipline policies shall be made known to all persons involved with the public schools.
- Class sizes that promote learning, encourage student participation, provide for individual student attention, and develop an atmosphere that sparks group interaction shall be established in every school

A TEACHER AFFECTS ETERNITY; HE CAN NEVER TELL WHERE HIS INFLUENCE STOPS.

HENRY ADAMS

district. Special attention shall be given to class size on the elementary level so that classes are small enough to afford the elementary teacher the opportunity to work with each student effectively.

PAY DAY

Most reports agree that salaries currently paid to teachers must be increased. However, there is widespread discussion as to how this increase should occur. There is talk of merit pay plans, master teacher plans, and career ladders. PSEA believes that the salary level of all teachers should be raised, thereby acknowledging the worth of the profession. Teachers have been performing admirably over the years and the time has come for this performance to be recognized. Such an action will attract persons to the profession and will encourage those same persons to remain in the classroom with students, which is exactly the opposite of the present system.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association recommends:

- The beginning salary for teachers shall be $25,000 and reach at least $50,000.
- The benefits paid to teachers shall be comprehensive.
- The employer shall assume the cost of professional improvement beyond the baccalaureate degree.
- Released time with salary shall be provided by the employer for participation in professional seminars, school visitations, and meetings with other professionals for instructional improvement.
- Sabbatical leave with full salary shall be available for all teachers.
- Full retirement after twenty-five years of service shall be available for all teachers.

the BEGINNING

The Pennsylvania State Education Association makes the recommendations included in this report with one purpose — to improve the quality of public education for all students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Some of the recommendations may be in place and some may be instituted very soon. Others can be implemented immediately. Still others will require a different philosophy, a new approach, and certainly change.

One fact is absolutely clear. Quality education is not

inexpensive. Such an achievement demands that all levels of government contribute their share. It demands that the method of financing education be examined with new eyes to provide equity in taxation and significant funding for public education. It demands that business and industry assume a greater role in financing and improving public education. This report merely touches on that role. PSEA is prepared to work with representatives of business and industry to clarify further just how such a role can be accomplished.

This report emphasizes and elevates the important role of the teacher in the pursuit of quality education. For that, PSEA makes no apology, because PSEA believes that the teacher is vital to the improvement of public education in Pennsylvania. The teacher must be at the apex of the public education system and must be recognized professionally and financially as recommended. Teaching must become **the** profession in this Commonwealth. To teachers, it already is. To society, it is yet to be. To PSEA, it will always be.

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